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ABSTRACT

The economic and political forces behind recent calls for excellence in education are pointing to necessarily dramatic changes in the nature of the teaching profession. Members of the business community, state political leaders, and teachers are working together--with substantial private and state monies--to implement a radical reform agenda that includes recommendations for (1) counteracting the rising rate of teacher attrition by transforming teaching into a rewarding and attractive career and (2) strengthening the quality of teaching by rebuilding the system of teacher education. Local school boards, which mainly have not been included in reform planning will need to respond with clarity and a constructive spirit to the force of many demands. This response, which could determine the success or failure of valuable reforms, will depend on the willingness and the ability of local educational leaders to (1) modify management and administrative practices and encourage administrators to provide new varieties of leadership; (2) establish and support measures related to raising teacher employment standards; (3) fashion and participate in new collective bargaining strategies with teachers; (4) devise ways for using new state mandates and guidelines to benefit local school programs; and (5) accord teaching a greater professional status. (IW)

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"REFORMING TEACHER SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION:

WHAT MAKES A GOOD TEACHER"

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SPEECH BEFORE THE NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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We are now in the fourth year of the age of excellence in education. It is almost that long since the stream of national reports and studies on elementary and secondary education began to descend upon us. It is absolutely clear that these reports have had a wide-ranging impact on the entire agenda of education policy throughout the nation, and upon the priority that education holds. We have a focus we have not had in almost a generation on curriculum requirements, on curriculum standards, and indeed on the content of what is taught; and we also have a new, most welcome, most surprising and long overdue emphasis on the revitalization of the teaching profession. By contrast, and this is worrisome, the issues of equal education opportunity, which have been so high on our agenda and which have been our great crusade and our great achievement for the past generation, have had trouble holding their own in this new policy environment. One must read and interpret all of these reports carefully to be assured that indeed we shall sustain equal education opportunity as we pursue excellence and not trade off (or trade in!) one for the other.

There were, I believe, two principal reasons for the resurgence of education on the public agenda. The first arose from within education itself. It was the long-simmering concern about the level of performance in our public schools. This concern stems certainly from the decade-long decline in SAT and other test scores. It comes also, I suspect, from a sense that, tragically, standards had been let slide for the sake of helping the disadvantaged to succeed--or seem to succeed--in school. Whatever the reason, there was a clear and growing anxiety among parents and others in the education community that was ready to be crystallized and galvanized into action, as it indeed was by A Nation at Risk and subsequent reports.

Second, there was a growing concern in the private business community that the supply of skilled workers for our economy was inadequate to the emerging demand and would become more so in the future. The business community and many political leaders throughout the nation were greatly concerned about the slow-down of productivity in the American economy during the '70s, about the growing intensity of international competition, and about the new skill requirements that computing and telecommunications and biogenetic technologies, as well as service and information industries, would place upon new workers in the future. These concerns led the business community to wake up, or so I would characterize it, to its growing self-interest in a strong and productive educational system. This concern was reinforced by the knowledge that, for the foreseeable future, and especially in our urban centers, larger and larger proportions of the students in our schools (and therefore of the young workers) would be of minority and disadvantaged backgrounds. The educational seriousness of the issue was thus compounded, since these students had been those with whom the educational system had so far been least successful.

The joining together of these two broad and deep currents of concern--the education public's concern about standards and the economy's concern about productivity--came together suddenly and swiftly in 1982 and 1983 and created the new agenda for education which we have termed "excellence."

After the first year or two of this turnaround, moreoever, it became evident that this agenda was being promoted and enacted by new political forces on the educational scene. The action was concentrated at the state level, in the absence of any federal interest; and the new actors were called governors. Sensing the political and economic soundness of programs intending to strengthen education at this point in our history, governor after governor, including, very

notably, the governor of this state, has assumed policy-making initiatives of a breadth and depth unparalleled (for governors!) in the history of American education.

The priority for education is as unquestionably high today in most states throughout the nation as it was four years ago low. There have been 300 state-level commissions set up to pursue one part or another of the educational excellence agenda. The State of the State messages delivered by governors in most of the states in recent years mention education on page one, if not paragraph one. Before 1982, few of these messages highlighted education at all.

Substantial new monies have gone into education in many states. The states have put over $10 billion in new money into education in the past few years and are now the major partner in educational finance. States now contribute well over half the dollars that support our nation's public schools.

There has been a torrent of new legislation and mandates: 47 states have increased high school graduation requirements; 44 have installed new or revised testing of students; 49 have raised or revised teacher preparation or certification requirements; over 40 have developed new professional development programs for teachers and administrators. Almost 40 have developed one form or another of performance-based teacher incentives--whether career ladders or incentive pay or rewards and recognition of various sorts.

And, there is, finally, a new public regard for education. In the Gallup Poll, for a decade before 1983 the level of public support for education has consistently declined year by year by year. In one year, from 1983 to 1984, this public regard bounced back to where it was a decade earlier, and has remained at that level to this day. Plainly, the agenda of excellence is popular.

In my view, the most surprising new priority to emerge in the excellence crusade is the revitalization of the teaching profession. Looking back five years, who could have guessed it? Who would have predicted it? Teachers were widely blamed for many of the perceived imperfections and failures of the schools during the turbulent times of the '60s and '70s. It seemed that the profession was beset with woes. Purchasing power and status had diminished. Teachers were the object of "teacher proof curricula" intended somehow to protect the students from the teacher rather than to afford the students the benefits that skilled teachers could and should provide. Professional pride and morale were low and sinking.

And then, as if someone had pulled up a shade, came these many national and state reports. For all their criticism of education, they spoke plainly of the teachers as an indispensible part of the solution and not simply as part of the problem. Dramatic improvement in the schools would require, it seemed, dramatic improvement in the ability of teachers to perform more effectively in the classroom. An obvious point, once made, but not, strangely enough, a point that had received much emphasis in recent years.

What did the teaching profession look like as we and it entered this time of opportunity? Linda Darling-Hammond of the Rand Corporation has summed it up very aptly and ruefully in an imaginary want ad:

> Wanted: College graduate with academic major, masters degree preferred, excellent communication and leadership skills required, challenging opportunity to serve 150 clients daily, developing up to five different products each day to meet their needs. This diversified job also allows employee to exercise typing, clerical, law enforcement and social work skills between assignments and after hours. Adaptability helpful, since suppliers cannot always deliver goods and support services on time. Typical work week is 47 hours. Special nature of work precludes fringe benefits such as lunch and coffee breaks but work has many intrinsic rewards. Starting salary $12,769 with a guarantee of $24,000 after only 14 years.

This deft caricature conveys a painful degree of truth about the state and status of teaching:

- the job had become more difficult
- the expectations were higher
- constraints were greater
- power and professional status were lacking
- preparation was often inadequate
- and the pay was lower--lower by 15% in real terms than it had been in 1970 and lower considerably than any other major occupation requiring a college degree.

In short, teaching had become an unattractive profession. Fifteen years earlier, about 25% of the students entering college intended to become teachers; today, that 25% has dwindled to 5%. There are only half enough prospective teachers in the pipeline of training institutions to fill the vacancies we know are going to exist in the next several years. Those few who are still ready to enter classroom teaching stand at or near the lowest level of collegiate abilities as measured by the SAT--with an average combined verbal and math score of 800! Talented women and minorities, traditionally mainstays of the teaching force, are taking advantage of new opportunities in other fields and avoiding education as a career. And many of the new teachers entering the classroom soon leave--up to 35% in the first five years of teaching, and the brighter the teacher, the more likely an early departure.

And what lay just over the horizon? A teacher shortage, as 1 million, or one-half of our nation's teachers are slated to leave the classroom in the next decade through attrition, but also through the impending retirement of those hundreds of thousands of experienced teachers whom we hired in the 1950s to teach the baby boom.

What a mess! As the depth and breadth of the task facing the nation in revitalizing teaching has become evident, we have seen, in state after state, a range of new policies proposed and adopted. We see many proposals for higher

pay especially at the beginning of the range. We have heard calls for different career structures (like the master teacher or other forms of specialized status) to create more opportunity for professional development and advancement. We have school improvement programs intended to create conditions where teachers can perform more collegially and effectively day to day in the school. We have bold new schemes for strengthening the training of teachers, both before and throughout their careers. And, we have new and mostly awkward attempts to hold teachers accountable to standards of performance through tests, certification, and evaluation processes. In short, we have seen proposed and often enacted a broad array of policies that have the multiple function of selecting, attracting, and holding onto appropriate persons to teach our children. You have seen several such initiatives in this state. Most states have moved in similar directions.

What is fascinating to see is that in the past 12 months, even as this unusually broad and ambitious agenda for the improvement of teaching has been installed in bits and pieces, in larger or smaller components, in many states in the union, the ante has been raised substantially by yet another round of reports proposing a second wave of reforms--potentially more radical changes in the very nature of the teaching profession and the organization and structure of our schools. These new proposals, taken together, would make the status and performance of American teachers the key ingredient in any likely future success of our schools. Moreover, the sources of these reports are even more broad than were the sources of the original reports. They come, with louder and louder voice, from the business community, from the new political leadership for education at the state level, and from the teaching profession itself, in its first real organized response to the calls for educational reform. Indeed, I would ask you to consider that we

may glimpse, in the commentaries being laid down today, the formation of a new community of interest among the business community, state political leadership, and teachers in a radical reform agenda for our schools.

Let me name and cite these reports.

The first is the report of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy entitled "A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century." That report, prepared by a panel of business, political, and educational leaders, and including the Presidents of both the NEA and the AFT, made a highly publicized call for a national board to establish professional teaching standards. Less famous, but more important, it also made far-reaching recommendations for what it calls a "Fundamental change in the internal life of the school" as holding the greatest promise for transforming teaching into a rewarding and attractive career and creating learning environments that promise to provide students with the capacity for independent thought and action. And what is that change? The change is, more than anything else, that we must invest teachers with a much greater degree of trust and responsibility to render professional judgments about the most appropriate educational treatments for their students.

From another source comes Investing in Our Children, the report of the Committee for Economic Development Task Force on Business and the Public Schools. That report says, and I quote, "The quality of teaching must come from enhancing and strengthening the professional roles of teachers, maximizing their abilities and opportunities to exercise judgment and make decisions, and reshaping and upgrading their work environments.... In sum, says the CED, we are calling for nothing less than a revolution in the role of the teacher and the management of the schools."

Similarly, the recent report of the Education Commission of the States under the leadership of Governor Kean says it all in its title: What Next? More Leverage for Teachers.

And finally comes the recent report on education of the 50 governors of the United States, called Time for Results. In this report, the Governors' Task Force on Teaching, headed by Governor Kean, sets forth sweeping reform agenda:

- to define the body of professional knowledge and practice that teachers must have;
- to create a national board to define teacher standards;
- to rebuild the system of teacher education;
- to redesign the organization of the schools to create more productive working and learning environments;
- to redesign the structure of the teaching career;
- to recruit able teacher candidates;
- to improve teacher compensation at entry and throughout the career;
- to align teacher incentives with school-wide student performance;
- to improve teacher mobility, and
- to establish a new approach to state and local regulation of schools including as a last resort what we euphemistically call intervention policies .

Yesterday, I read that one group (Carnegie) had given another (National Governors' Association) $900,000 to implement their shared agenda. Think of that--governors, business leaders, and teachers coming together around a new agenda for the future of teaching--an agenda that none of them had articulated a few years ago. And consider, too, my friends, who is not very prominent in this picture. You. Local educational leadership. Notwithstanding the prominent national nature of these reports, and notwithstanding the recent concentration of political and policy activity at the state level, any revolution in our schools will occur or not occur as you--in the localities of New Jersey and throughout the nation--decide to implement it, to make it happen. And you, the local authorities, have not by and large yet spoken with a loud and clear voice.

Initially, your reserve was entirely understandable. Here was a rip tide of rhetoric such as washes over our schools from time to time, usually causing little harm but carrying the unwary to a watery grave. You who raise taxes for our schools, who set local policies, who give each school system its authentic local perspective and standards, who hire its educators, and who bargain in good faith with its teachers' legitimate representatives--you were well entitled to take a wait-and-see attitude--to see if the new enthusiasm would persist and be converted into resources and support you could use to improve your schools. You were entitled to say that reforms are easy to proclaim but hard to pay for and implement, and to warn that any reforms which diminished local control of schools and replaced it with a centralized authority might have long-term consequences that no one wanted or intended.

Now it is time to respond with clarity and constructive spirit. The economic and political force behind the calls for improvement in education have made education a great issue and pointed to necessarily dramatic changes in the nature of the teaching profession. Those forces will not disappear or even abate. They arise from demographic and economic realities which will make excellent education a more and more important ingredient in the success of each individual and in the success of our nation. It may be this year or it may be next that you will feel the force of these demands, but feel them you will. Let me suggest several crucial respects in which your ability to respond could make or break the hoped-for reforms.

First, will you be able and willing to modify management and administrative practices in your school and to encourage all principals and administrators to provide new varieties of leadership to the schools, so that teachers will in turn be enabled to take on greater responsibility for the development and execution of the school's instructional program?

Second, will you be able and willing, over the next several years, to establish and support those measures which will be needed at the point of entry, the hiring desk, to raise the quality of new entrants into the teaching profession? The reformers suppose that we can raise standards at a time of teacher shortage. What will you do when you face the prospect of not having a candidate who is qualified according to new and higher standards--when you face the temptation of putting someone less qualified in the classroom so that the students will not lack a teacher? The onus of responsible decision will rest heavily upon you in this particular area, as it often has in the past. The stakes will be higher, and the outcome more visible. You will succeed only if your convictions are clear and steadfast.

Third, will you be able to fashion and participate in new collective bargaining strategies, with teachers, who are moving into new professional and educational roles in ways which will enhance their status and performance and yet uphold the integrity of the bargaining process, and of wage settlements and other aspects of the collective bargaining system?

Fourth, will you be able to devise ways in which your local system can use new state mandates and guidelines to benefit your local school program? I was recently the chairman of the New Jersey Commission on the Supervision of Instruction, and this issue was at the heart of that commission's concern. How can the state raise an issue as important as this one is and then provide guidelines and resources so that the local authority can develop better processes in this critical area of teacher performance--processes which make sense to the teachers, staff, and local school community? The way I have put the question, it answers itself. We can, if both state and locality have such an outcome as their mutual objective. We can honor local integrity in the context of state priorities. The New Jersey Plan for the Supervision of Instruction sets out to do this very thing; but it will be for you, not me, to judge how well we have succeeded, and you will have many more such judgments to make.

At the bottom of all this is another question yet, the most basic of all: Are you willing and able to accord teaching a greater professional status in your schools, with all of the risks and discomforts that may entail for you and your schools? It is indeed the case that the current status of teachers is a confusing one, even to teachers. Teachers are seen by some as employees and as unionists by others, as bureaucrats or artists or professionals--and indeed they are often all of the above.

Your goal must be to encourage teachers to move in the path of professionalism. We are asking for teachers who know their subject better, probably on the basis of an excellent liberal arts education. We are asking for teachers who know children, and how they grow and develop, teachers who know society and for what purposes it supports their efforts in schools. We are asking for teachers who know how to seek and use knowledge to solve the problems they encounter in everyday practice. We want teachers who are sensitive to and skillful with the great and growing diversity of students who will increasingly characterize the classrooms in all of our schools. We want teachers who know that they are, unavoidably, moral agents in the life of the children they teach. We want teachers who are committed to the democratic purposes of education in our society--that is, to provide what Thomas Jefferson called an education to virtue, which will motivate each citizen to consider the public as well as the private interest. I submit to you that one whom we regard as merely an employee or a bureaucrat or even an artist or craftsperson cannot be expected to have all those attributes. We must give such persons, whom we have chosen, after all, to communicate to our children what we think is most valuable and worth knowing about our civilization, the status of professionals, with all of the autonomy and respect that designation entails. There will be pain in that, there will be difficulty

in that. Both we and the teachers whom we regard and respect have built many habits and ways of behaving which fall far short of this ideal. And yet, is there any other path to the necessary improvement of our schools as we launch ourselves into the 21st Century? I think not. Old molds must be broken and new molds formed. You must have your hands in the clay of that creation.